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## THE IMPACT OF CASH AND COMMODITIZATION ON THE BAKA HUNTER-GATHERER SOCIETY IN SOUTHEASTERN CAMEROON

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**ABSTRACT** The Baka in southeastern Cameroon are one of the “Pygmy” hunter-gatherer groups living in the tropical rainforest of central Africa. Since the 1950s, they have gradually adopted cultivation and sedentarization, as well as the use of money and commoditization. One of the characteristics of the Baka monetary activities is the importance of direct and immediate consumption, similar to that in hunting-gathering activities. Small amounts of money are used differently from the way large amounts of money are used. The former is used for daily goods, and the latter is for bride-wealth. The limited usage of bills of high denomination prevents inequality across the society of the Baka in spite of the large difference in their cash income. But there is a potential for capitalistic use of money and inequality through the commoditization of labor among the Baka. In the 1950s, the Baka were under farmer control in term of the circulation of money and European products, which enlarged social and economic dominance of farmers over the Baka. However, the adoption of cultivation of Bakas’ fields, the increased importance of the Baka as cacao and coffee field laborers, and the advance of logging companies, loosened farmer control of money and European products. These circumstances have helped the Baka keep relative autonomy in their economy and society, compared to other Pygmy groups at present.

**Key Words:** Baka; Hunter-gatherer; Money; Commoditization; Social change; Equality.

### INTRODUCTION

The Baka in southeastern Cameroon are one of the “Pygmy” hunter-gatherer groups living in the tropical rainforest of central Africa. Before the 1950s, they mainly depended on wild resources in the forest, while maintaining economic and social relationships with the neighboring farmers. Since the 1950s, Baka life has radically changed through the adoption of the cultivation of their own fields, sedentarization, and the penetration of money and commoditization (Althabe, 1965; Kitanishi, 2003).

The previous anthropological studies on the ecology and economy of hunter-gatherer societies generally focused on the utilization and sharing of wild resources. It has been frequently reported that food sharing can be observed among almost all hunter-gatherers, and Leacock & Lee (1982) suggested that sharing is one of the core features denoting hunter-gatherer societies.

Today it is recognized that there are no “pure” hunter-gatherers anywhere who depend solely on wild resources (Headland & Reid, 1989). Rather, the economies of present hunter-gatherers are in fact affected not only by economic

relationships with adjacent non-foraging societies but also a wide range of external influences. The impact of money and commoditization is one such influence. Some researchers have reported on the negative influence on the socio-economic integration of hunter-gatherer societies, such as the reduction of economic ties ascribed to sharing, or change in the unit of production and consumption into individual or nuclear family (Murphy & Steward, 1956). From this standpoint, economies and societies of hunter-gatherers cannot resist the penetration of money and commoditization, and they will be absorbed into a larger external economic system. Feit (1991), however, regarded this viewpoint of hunter-gatherer societies as too reactive, and indicated the necessity of the analysis on the internal dynamics and processes of reproduction and transformation of societies. In fact, although the food sharing system has gradually changed, it is still retained in some hunter-gatherer societies, playing an important role as a basis for their economic and social relationships (Peterson & Matsuyama, 1991; Wenzel et al., 2000). Among the Baka, the food sharing system maintains important functions, although changing its form (Kitanishi, 2000). But it is not appropriate to conclude that hunter-gatherer societies control the penetration of cash and commoditization (Peterson, 1991). Hunter-gatherer societies have generally been situated at the peripheral area in the global economy among nation states. It is more appropriate to say that they have painfully accepted cash and commoditization, partly reinterpreting the context of use of cash and commodity. The Baka case is no exception.

One can analyze the economic impact on the Baka of contact with external societies from two aspects (Kitanishi, 2000). First, the analysis is necessary of such impacts on the goods originally existed in the economic system such as food. Do such goods attain new values in the external economic system (ex. purchase with cash) or will these goods remain in the original economic system, separated from the external economic system? <sup>(1)</sup> Second, analysis is necessary as to how money and goods from the external economy are treated in the original economic system.

In this paper, I mainly address the second issue, describing the transaction and exchange through cash in detail. After an overview of acquisition and use of money, I submit two interesting cases of how a large amount of money a Japanese researcher gave as wage was used, where one shows the involvement of money in the traditional economic system, and the other shows the gradual introduction of capitalistic style. Analysis on the first aspect, especially food sharing, was already undertaken by Kitanishi (2000), based on the field research in 1993. Since then the economic situation has gradually changed. Therefore, I describe the present conflict between sharing and the selfish use of goods as well. Based on these analyses, I show how the external economy has involved the Baka economic system, how the Baka economic system has absorbed money, and how cash and commoditization have affected Baka society. I also consider equality and inequality among the Baka society as a consequence of impacts of money and commoditization. In addition, I reconstruct the change in the economic relationship between the Baka and neighboring farmers since the 1950s. The change is ongoing, and therefore, continuous research is necessary.

## RESEARCH AREA, PEOPLES AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

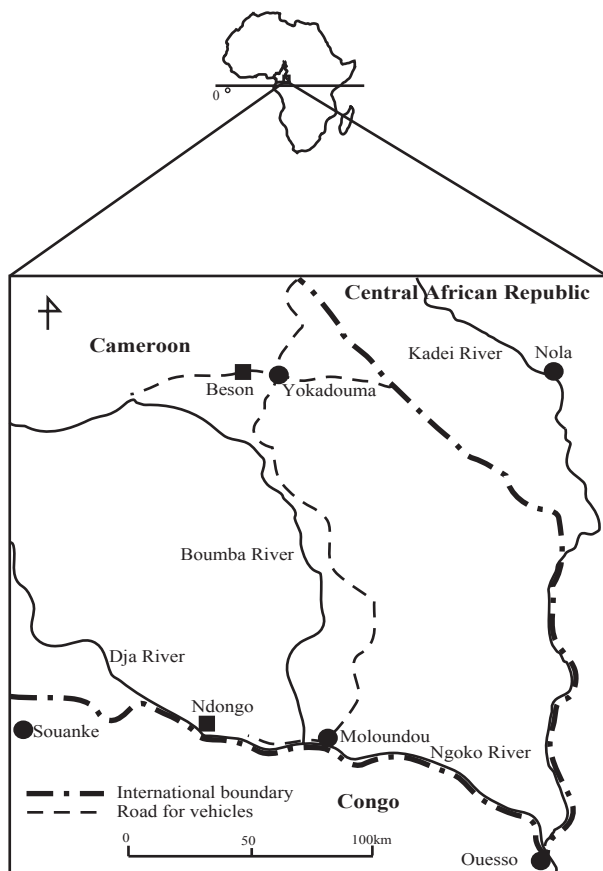
The Baka are regarded as the indigenous people in the tropical rainforest, as other Pygmies, such as the Mbuti in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Aka in the Republic of Congo. Overall, there are approximately 25,000 Baka living in southeastern Cameroon and northwestern Congo (Hitchcock, 1999). They speak the Ubangian language (Bahuchet, 1992). In southeastern Cameroon, several ethnic groups of farmers, such as the Bakwele, the Konabembe, the Mbomam (all Bantu speakers) and the Bangando (Ubangian speakers) live in the neighborhood of the Baka.

My field research was conducted at Ndongo Village, Boumba and Ngoko Department, East Province of the Republic of Cameroon (2.08° N Lat. and 14.90° E Long., Fig. 1) from February to March 1999 and from August to October 2000. Ndongo Village was founded in the 1960s by the Bakwele<sup>(2)</sup> people, whose language belongs to Bantu A group. The village is located at the innermost recess along the Dja River from Moloundou, the capital of the Sub-prefecture. When the Bakwele people migrated to the village, the Baka accompanied them and made separate settlements. At present, the population of the Bakwele in Ndongo Village is about 70. There are five Baka settlements around the village, and their population is about 250 (Hayashi, 2000). In addition to the Baka and Bakwele, a few families of the Hausa, whose native land is northern Cameroon, live around Ndongo Village. While these Hausa have their large fields of shifting cultivation and cacao, they are merchants, who sell various goods such as salt, sugar, rice, cooking oil, cigarettes and clothes.

Before the 1950s, the Baka mainly depended on wild animals and plants, leading a nomadic life in the forest. They moved their camp every few weeks to a few months, rarely making contact with persons other than the Baka. They kept intimate relationships with some limited neighboring farmers, with whom forest products (meat, honey, etc.) were exchanged for agricultural and steel products. The Baka also helped with the agricultural work. In those days, the Baka seldom used money (Althabe, 1965).

Althabe (1965) described the life of the Baka in the 1950s, which began to change drastically. Due to the transformation of the relationship with neighboring farmers and the colonial government policy of sedentarization and adoption of cultivation, the Baka gradually went out of the forest, made settlements along roads and possessed their own fields. They also came in contact with a large number of farmers. In the 1950s, the neighboring farmers began to cultivate cacao and coffee as cash crops, and some Baka were employed for labor. They received cash or the industrial goods imported from Europe in return.

At that time, the Hausa merchants came to open periodic markets, and the Baka went to these markets more than 100 km away to buy soap, cosmetic cream and enamelware. The Baka were deeply fascinated with such European industrial goods. Few persons could calculate money (i.e. realize that ten sheets of ten francs bill had equal value to one sheet of 100 franc bill) in each settlement, and others thought that each bill or coin had each intrinsic



**Fig. 1.** Research Area.

qualitative value. While cash was solely used for the purchase of European goods and bride-wealth, the Baka neither sold nor bought food they produced. I will describe the use for bride-wealth later.

The advance of logging companies into this area is said to have familiarized the Baka with cash. Logging companies began operation in the 1970s in southeastern Cameroon, cutting down all trees with commercial value in one site, and moving to other sites to do the same (Ichikawa, 2002). I show here the process of the advance into and abandonment by a logging company of Ndongo Village.

In 1973, a logging company came to Ndongo Village, constructed roads and bridges for large trucks, and a lumberyard (Hayashi, 2000). Many laborers rushed in from Yaoundé, the political capital of Cameroon, and Douala, the commercial capital of Cameroon facing the Atlantic Ocean. Hausa merchants also migrated to Ndongo Village to sell daily goods to laborers and local

people. People living in the neighborhood of Ndongo Village and those from the other side of the Dja River in Congo also migrated. As a result, there once was several times as much population as at present.

The logging company paid much money to a large number of laborers, who used their wages in various ways: for agricultural produce, fish caught in the Dja River, and meat hunted in the forest. The Bakwele mainly supplied the agricultural produce and fish, whereas the Baka directly or indirectly provided bush meat.

Some Baka men were employed by the logging company. Although their wages were the cheapest among all laborers, they received 20,000-40,000 CFA francs<sup>(3)</sup> a month, which was quite a large amount of money compared to their cash income before employment.

In 1982, when the logging company left (Hayashi, 2000), almost all laborers from outside of the village also relocated. But a few farmers who earned much money and the Hausa merchants invested in cacao fields. They purchased cacao fields from other farmers, and employed the Baka to clear the forest and make new cacao fields. They also employed the Baka to maintain the fields and to harvest cacao. In addition, the Baka themselves began to cultivate cacao at their own fields to earn cash.

Through such a historical process, the Baka of Ndongo Village became accustomed to using cash. But their ideas of saving and consuming money are markedly different from that of people embedded deeply in the market economy. Below, I analyze the exchange of cash I observed in the field to explain the characteristics of how money is used among the Baka.

## HOW TO ACQUIRE MONEY

### I. Gift without Return

Cash as pure gift is rare among the Baka, differing from food, local spirits and cigarettes. When the Baka earn money, while they do not have to share it with others, they indirectly do so mainly through local spirits and bride-wealth as shown below. Direct gifts without return between close relatives (parents and children) was observed. When a son or daughter needs cash, a parent gives some to him or her. When a child earns money, he or she offers some to his or her parent.

### II. Acquisition of Cash in Return for the Labor

At present, the labor of the Baka is a commodity for at least persons other than the Baka. The Baka men and women frequently work in the fields of the Bakwele and the Hausa. The Bakwele generally employ the Baka by the day. While the main work for men is clearing forest for shifting cultivation and

weeding, that of women is weeding and harvesting.<sup>(4)</sup> The pay for a day's work is fixed at 250 CFA francs, for which there are several ways for payment. While the Bakwele sometimes pay cash after the work, they frequently pay with local spirits made by the Bakwele women worth 250 CFA francs for 0.5 liter. Occasionally, the Bakwele pay with local spirits in advance to ask for agricultural work. Baka women sometimes receive a part of the harvest. Even when the Baka receive cash after work, they often buy local spirits immediately. In March, the clearing season for shifting cultivation, several Bakwele visit the Baka settlement every morning to ask the Baka men to work at their fields. One Hausa man with the largest cacao and shifting cultivation fields does not make local spirits, so generally pays cash to the Baka. Because he is a merchant, he sometimes gives commodities worth 250 CFA francs from his shop such as rice, salt, a can of sardine, and cooking oil. Sometimes the Baka who receive cash buy these goods immediately.

The Hausa often employ the Baka, especially for harvesting cacao, for weeks to a few months. In such cases, the wage is paid in a lump sum after the sale of cacao seeds to cacao traders, and the wage depends on the price of cacao, generally 30,000-100,000 CFA francs for men, and 15,000-30,000 CFA francs for women (Hayashi, 2000). This difference in salary between Baka men and women is due to the evaluation of labor by the Hausa. In seasons other than the cacao harvesting season, the Hausa sometimes employ the Baka for a few weeks, and the Baka receive cash or goods they value highly such as clothes and sandals. The long engagement is generally for young adult men.

Non-villagers also often employ the Baka men, but not the women. The men occasionally guide foreigners who come to hunt wild animals. In this case, the wage depends on negotiation. A Japanese research team took up base at Ndongo Village. Japanese researchers who stay there generally employ a few Baka men as assistants and informants. Japanese researchers generally pay wages once a month. But the Baka employees often asked me to pay some money in advance, and I paid the amount of money. I paid the rest at the end of the month.

### III. Acquisition of Cash in Exchange for Goods

The Baka exchange various wild resources and agricultural produce for cash. First, I describe the former.

Meat is the most important forest resource for the Baka to sell. At present, the Baka use spring traps with steel wire, and shotguns for hunting (Hayashi, 2000). When they stay at the settlement, they put traps around their fields for small-sized or mid-sized duikers. Occasionally, they stay in the temporary forest camp for hunting, and they catch larger animals, such as bush pigs.

The Bakwele sometimes ask the Baka men to go to hunt with a Bakwele's shotgun. The target animals of gun hunting are monkeys, duikers and bush pigs. The game belongs to the Bakwele owner of the gun and shot, who give a part of the meat to the Baka hunter. Recently, a Baka man who worked at a



logging company near Moloundou bought a shotgun. Some Baka men go hunt with his shotgun and shot purchased themselves. In this case, the game belongs to the owner of the shot, who gives some meat to the shotgun owner.

Although occasionally some meat or the whole meat is shared with close relatives, the majority of meat is generally sold. Purchasers are the Bakwele and the Baka who have cash when meat is sold. Because the Baka have a great preference for meat, it is easy to sell. Since hunting is male work, game belongs to men, as well as the profit from its sale.

Until recently, the unit of meat for sale was a large lump such as a whole body or half body of small-sized duiker, or a leg of a mid-sized duiker or a bush pig. They sell for generally more than 1000 CFA francs. For meat of small animals, the seller ordinarily takes the meat to a potential buyer and negotiates its price. For meat of large animals, he waits until someone comes to buy meat, because the news of successful hunting spreads quickly.

Nowadays, the way of selling meat is changing. The sellers often price many smaller lumps at 50 or 100 CFA francs. They vend around the settlements, with the lumps of meat on a lid of a large pot, making the pieces visible to the Baka inhabitants, calling "Morceau, 50 (100) francs." (Morceau means a lump in French). All this whets the appetite of the Baka, who immediately purchase the meat if they have 100 CFA francs in coins. Although the extra labor to cut and peddle is necessary for this way of sales, they can obtain 150-200% more income in this way than previously. That they use a French term to express a lump of meat shows that this activity was introduced from towns such as Moloundou, directly or indirectly through the Bakwele. In the settlements, now the Baka generally regard meat as a commodity, and try to gain more profit through its sale.

But meat sharing is still appreciated by the Baka, and a conflict between sharing and selling meat arises. Here are two comments from the Baka on meat sharing. A Baka man complained to me, "Although meat is shared in the forest camp, no one shares in the settlement, so forest life is good."<sup>(5)</sup> Another Baka man was demanded to share meat by another, and refused saying, "When I demanded meat sharing from you, you refused. So I don't give you." These comments show that because meat sharing does not always happen, the Baka now feel some frustration about it.

Among wild plant resources, nuts of *Irvingia gabonensis* are the most important for cash income. In 2000, *I. gabonensis* was abundant throughout southern Cameroon. The Baka of Ndongo Village stayed in the forest for a few months to collect the nuts. The cotyledon of nuts was dried, roasted and pounded, then put into a mold to make cakes (Kitanishi, 1994). They use this molded cake as seasoning oil for stews. Because the Bakwele also prefer it, they purchase the cakes from the Baka. In addition, peddlers come and buy them from the Baka to sell in town or city. In a good year, they can earn more than 10,000 CFA francs by selling the molded cakes. Nut collecting and making the cakes is female work.

Wild edible leaves such as *Gnetum* spp. are occasionally sold to the Bakwele



(Hayashi, per. com.). Baka girls collect fruits of the African pepper (*Piper guineense*) to sell to the Hausa merchants, who take them to the town. The Hausa pay little for them, 100 CFA francs and a candy for a full pot.

The produce that brings in the most money for the Baka is cacao, which is the only cash crop in Ndongo Village. A third of Baka adult men in the village own cacao fields (Hayashi, per. com.). Men over 35 years old harvest much cacao, whereas young adult men do not as much. The maximum yield among the Baka is 8 sacs (a sac contains 80 kg of dry cacao; Hayashi, 2000). The Baka regard cacao fields as men's, therefore, profit from the cacao harvest belongs to men.

Cacao traders come to the village every December. In 2000, traders bought cacao for 37,500 CFA francs per sac. The price varies each year, depending on the international cacao market. But the Baka sell cacao to the Hausa merchants before traders come to the village, because they want cash as soon as possible, and because keeping cacao for a few months is troublesome for the Baka. According to Hayashi (2000), the price of a sac of cacao which the Baka sold to the Hausa merchant was 12,000-25,000 CFA francs. The Hausa merchants hold the cacao from the Baka until traders come, and gain much profit from the difference in the prices.

Other agricultural foods are rarely purchased, although purchase is possible. When I told to a Baka assistant that I wanted to buy plantain, he immediately found a seller in the settlement. The price of one cluster of plantain is 100 CFA francs. I observed only once the purchase of oil palm fruits, collected by a Baka couple. The husband shared some oil palm fruits with the families living around his house, and sold five handfuls of 13 fruits (130 g at 100 CFA francs each). Two young Baka men near his house bought these fruits. I could not reason why the seller differentiated the persons whom he shared the fruits from those who bought them, because the buyers were also his relatives. It might be that the young men were richer from working for the Hausa.

## HOW TO USE MONEY

### I. The Use of a Small Amount of Money

The Baka usage of a large amount of cash is different from that of a small amount. First, I analyze how they use less than 1000 CFA francs.

What the Baka purchase most frequently is the local spirits made by the Bakwele women. When the Baka have several 100 CFA franc coins, they generally buy local spirits immediately, and drink with other Baka. Not only the persons who have the coins desire to buy the drink, persons around them also immensely wish he would. It is more difficult for the Baka to refuse sharing the local spirits than other goods such as meat. I have never observed a Baka sell the drink to other Baka.

But the idea that the local spirits should be shared is gradually changing, especially among young men. A young man, Ndomba,<sup>(6)</sup> employed by me, received an advance on his salary to buy two or three liters of the drink. Usually, those present around the owner of the local spirits drink it all. Even if the owner keeps the local spirits in his house, his wife or others around his house drink it all without permission of the owner when he is away. Although the owner may get angry, he has no way to sanction this "stealing." Ndomba thought out a plan. He asked me to keep his local spirits in the Japanese researchers' dwelling. He guessed that others could not steal his drink, because they could not enter the place without my permission. He wished to drink with me and the other Baka man also employed by me. But he did not succeed. When we drank in our house, other Baka found out and gathered around our house, and Ndomba had to share until all the local spirits were drunk. This case clearly shows the conflict between sharing and selfish use.

The Baka purchase fish, meat, marijuana and kerosene from the Bakwele, besides the local spirits. The Bakwele fish in Dja River. When they catch large fish, they sell it to the Hausa, me and the Baka with cash, such as my employee. The Baka buy meat from the Bakwele and other Baka. The Bakwele sell kerosene bought in town for 500 CFA francs per liter. Because there is no electricity in Ndongo Village, the Baka use kerosene lamps.

The Hausa merchants have small shops, where they sell various goods. The Baka frequently purchase salt and cigarettes at these shops. Four cigarettes cost 100 CFA francs, twice as much as in town. A small package of salt also can be bought with coins. In addition, the Baka purchase rice and cooking oil. Although sugar, canned tomato, candy, instant coffee and teabags are also sold at the shops, the Baka seldom buy them. Occasionally, they buy shot (650 CFA francs).

The Baka rarely accumulate money to buy expensive goods. Small sums of money are immediately exchanged with goods, especially the local spirits.

## II. The Use of a Large Amount of Money

The Baka can obtain more than several thousands CFA francs by selling cacao and from working for the Hausa long-term. If they do, they sometimes buy expensive goods such as clothes, sandals, a pot, a machete or a radio cassette recorder. Especially when cacao is traded, many merchants come from the towns to Ndongo Village, and the Baka immediately consume cash earned through cacao (Hayashi, 2000).

Bride-wealth is the most important use for money when the Baka gain more than 10,000 CFA francs. Bride-wealth is generally given to the wife's father from the husband over several times, whenever he obtains large amounts of cash. Although a Baka man once told me that the sum of bride-wealth had reached 200,000 CFA francs, it is not fixed.<sup>(7)</sup> The Baka man who marries owes an unlimited debt to his wife's father unless he divorces.

### III. Two Cases Showing the Use of a Large Amount of Money

In September 2000, when I arrived at Ndongo Village, the other Japanese researcher there employed two Baka men. When he left for Japan ahead of me, he paid the employees 20,000 CFA francs (two 10,000 CFA franc bills) each. I describe next the usage of cash by these two Baka men Kamba and Mbombo.

#### 1. *Money as Bride-Wealth*

Kamba had already paid his wife's father 25,000 CFA francs as bride-wealth, but his father-in-law was not satisfied, and Kamba decided to pay him cash received from a Japanese researcher. But because his wife's father stayed at the forest camp at that time, Kamba kept the 20,000 CFA francs until his return. One day, Kamba asked me for 1000 CFA francs in advance. Because he had the cash from the Japanese researcher, I told him that the payment in advance was not necessary. But he did not consent, and repeatedly asserted that the wage of 20,000 CFA francs was kept aside as bride-wealth. Consequently, I gave him 1000 CFA francs in advance, but could not understand his demand because I thought that the cash for bride-wealth was qualitatively same as the cash that I would give him in advance, and his eventual salary from me.

When I understood the process of introduction of cash into the Baka society as bride-wealth, as described in detail by Althabe (1965), I could regard the behavior of Kamba as reasonable. In the 1950s, cash and goods from Europe were introduced into the Baka economy. At that time, only bills of high denomination (1000 CFA francs) were used as bride-wealth, whereas bills of low denomination and coins were used for daily European goods such as soap. Bills used for bride-wealth could not qualitatively be identified with cash used in daily purchase. These two categories of money each had different circulation spheres. A father who obtained bills of 1000 francs in exchange for his daughter could use them only as bride-wealth for his son's wife or his wife. The Baka did not buy daily goods with bills of high denomination.

Kamba's demand for payment in advance shows that the qualitative difference between bills of high denomination and low denomination has been maintained among the Baka even today. Kamba thought that the qualitative value of ten 1000 CFA franc bills was not the same as that of one 10,000 CFA franc bill: the former was used for daily goods, the latter was for bride-wealth. When he demanded payment in advance, what he needed was money for daily use.

I try to reconstruct the origin of the two categories of money in the exchangeable spheres. Before the introduction of money, what goods were used as bride-wealth? Althabe (1965) supposed that marriage with bride-wealth itself arose from the adoption of cultivation and sedentarization. He said that before the 1950s, the Baka possessed minimal goods for daily life not worth keeping, because of their nomadic life. The Baka could keep various goods after sedentarization, and at this time, cash and European products had special value, and came to be exchanged as bride-wealth. Because the wild forest resources could be obtained freely and were not special, and because the Baka could not

control their exchange, they were not suitable for bride-wealth. But Althabe (1965) did not explain marriage before the 1950s. This may be because some Baka conducted sister exchange marriage, still observed among the Efe Pygmy in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (Terashima, 1987). But according to the Baka in Ndongo Village, a spear head, an ax blade, a machete and clothes were used as bride-wealth of the marriage in the 1960s.

Among the Aka Pygmy in the southern Central African Republic and northeastern Republic of Congo, iron products have been used as bride-wealth for a long time. They were received from the neighboring farmers in exchange for ivory (Bahuchet, 1985). When I researched the Aka in the 1990s in northeastern Congo, where money seldom circulated among the Aka, they still used spear heads, ax blades and hunting nets as bride-wealth.<sup>(8)</sup> It is not easy to acquire or make these things. Because the Aka cannot make iron products themselves, they had to come from the neighboring farmers, and were special. Also making nets took a large amount of time, so they were special.

In the Aka economy, there are two categories of things by the exchangeable spheres. While products for bride-wealth are frequently exchanged with each other, as well as women, they are never exchanged with things in the other category such as food.

Considering the Baka case in comparison with the Aka, bride-wealth of the Baka probably changed from iron products to bills of high denomination due to the introduction of cash into their economy, and even now what is suitable as bride-wealth is in a separate category from other things in circulation. In our economy, one of the functions of money is the standard to measure quantitative value. Although 50 years has passed after introduction of money into the Baka economy, money still has intrinsic qualitative value.

At present, the use of bills of high denomination is not limited to the circulation of bride-wealth. They are eventually broken down to purchase commodities, leaving the sphere of bride-wealth. Because the Baka implicitly observe and follow the categories of exchangeable sphere, no one tries to strictly control the circulation of money now. When cacao traders come to the village, merchants also come to sell goods to the Baka with cash from the cacao sale. In addition, the Hausa merchants sell various goods any time. However, it is difficult to sell and buy with bills of high denomination among the Baka or between the Baka and Bakwele, because no one has change. Scarcity of coins and bills of low denomination circulating in the village economy restricts bills of high denomination from flowing into the other sphere of circulation. The Baka living near towns may lose these two categories in exchangeable spheres because of larger and fluid circulation of money.

## *2. Commoditization of the Baka Labor by the Baka*

Mbombo was asked about the use of his salary, and answered that he would use it as bride-wealth. Several days after, I observed that he bought a large amount of marijuana from the Bakwele. In Ndongo Village, a small packet of marijuana was worth 100 CFA francs. Although the Baka generally bought

only one or a few packets, he had more than 30 packets. When I asked, he answered that he would give them to other Baka men who would weed his fields of cacao and shifting cultivation.

Until then, I assumed that the Baka used money only as a means in exchange for consumption: they exchange a commodity for money to exchange money for another commodity, and consume it (Fig. 2, A). But Mbombo invested his salary from a Japanese researcher for the later production of cacao and shifting cultivation (Fig. 2, B). If he understood that the interest created in work by other Baka exchanged for marijuana could be larger than the cost of marijuana, he had used money as capital. Although it is not clear whether he understood the capitalistic use of money or not, he used money not for direct and immediate consumption but for the future harvest, which was a first step in capitalism.<sup>(9)</sup>

While I observed frequently that neighboring farmers, the Hausa and persons from other societies including me treated the Baka labor as commodity, I have never seen the Baka treated other Baka labor as commodity except for the above case. Mbombo's trial in the commoditization of labor might derive from the collective agricultural work: The Baka sometimes formed a group of 5-10 men to clear each member's field, day by day in turn. This practice accustomed the Baka men to work the fields of other men. According to Hayashi (per. com.), one group member distributed the local spirits to other group members on the day for clearing his field. This Baka man intended them to clear wider fields, because drinking makes the drinkers forget their fatigue, and because the Baka greatly like it. Although this transaction was not a pure exchange of Baka labor for the local spirits, it can be said that this case also was at the preparative stage of commoditization of the Baka labor by the Baka. The case of Mbombo can be regarded as one step advanced in the commoditization of labor. Probably Mbombo did not invent the commoditization of labor, but imitated the Bakwele and Hausa.

Because my research was finished, I could not observe the consequence of the trial by Mbombo. I think the possibility of his success is not large. Among the Baka, the idea that marijuana should be shared is quite strong as well as

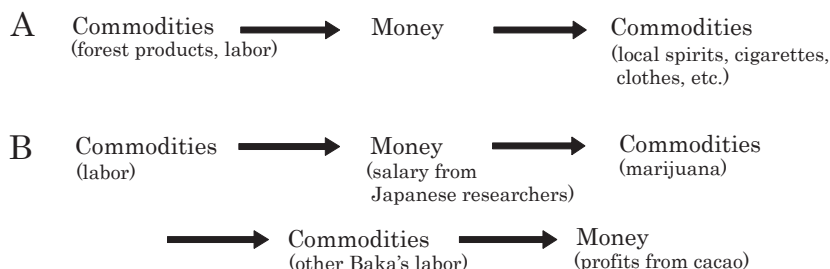


Fig. 2. Schema of Exchange.

local spirits and cigarettes. When they smoke, they generally pass the cigarette and marijuana around among those who are present. It is quite a subtle issue whether receivers regarded the received marijuana as something exchanged for their labor or as a gift which did not need a return.

## IMMEDIATE AND DIRECT PRODUCTION-CONSUMPTION AND MONEY

One feature of hunting-gathering is the short time-lag between labor investment and return, usually one day (Woodburn, 1982; Kitanishi, 2003).<sup>(10)</sup> After the adoption of cultivation by the Baka, the time-lag of production and consumption elongated to several months to a few years, but their agricultural practice shows unplanned nature, which have greatly been affected by the cycle of investment to return in hunting-gathering (Kitanishi, 2003).

The Baka economic activities with money have been also influenced by the one-day time-lag of production and consumption. The Baka incline to consume cash immediately and directly. They generally follow their desire for the goods in front of them, without saving money for future consumption. This tendency is typically when they buy local spirits soon after they are paid several hundred CFA francs for agricultural work, or when they sell cacao to the Hausa at a cheaper price than with cacao traders as they cannot wait, or when they frequently ask for an advance of their salary. They can buy expensive goods only when they gain a large amount of money at a time.

However, some Baka began to work for future interests. Cacao cultivation needs the accumulation of labor to make a large profit. They were aware that several years pass after planting seedlings, or several months after weeding. While they mainly do daily work at the Bakweles' fields, they work for a few months at the Hausas' fields to gain several ten thousands of CFA francs at a time.

The use of money for the future was also observed, as well as working for the future. As I described in the previous pages, Mbombo tried to use money for future production. Mbombo has the most experience with the external societies of the village. He solely finished primary school among the Baka in the village, and the missionary of Moloundou, who assisted the education of the Baka, asked him for his help to primary school education of the Baka in the village. In my research period, Mbombo alone used money for the future. At present, the conflict between immediate and direct production and consumption, and delayed and indirect production and consumption occurs among the Baka. I will inspect in future research whether Mbombo will have opened the door to a capitalistic style of economic system or he failed because other Baka would not follow his style.

## MONEY AND SHARING

Accompanied with the penetration of money and commoditization, the importance of each family or individual as an economic unit increased, the unit of production changed from group to the individual or nuclear family, and goods and land became private property in other hunter-gatherer societies (Murphy & Steward, 1956; Gomes, 1991). With these changes, sharing decreased because what had been formerly shared became goods for sale (Peterson, 1991). Among the Mbuti Pygmies, meat traders came to their forest camp to buy meat hunted with nets. Consequently, the amount of meat shared with the camp members decreased, and especially when game in the camp was small, the owner of meat had to decide whether he would share it or sell it to a trader. In addition, while the Mbuti men formerly had eaten meals together at the center of camp, they separately ate with their families after the impact of the meat trade (Ichikawa, 1991a).

The conflict between sharing and selfish use has risen also among the Baka. In spite of their positive evaluation of meat sharing I showed above, they do not have to share meat with other Baka now. The case of oil palm sharing and sale described above also raises the question of with whom they share and to whom they sell. It seems that the Baka themselves have not put sharing and sale in order, yet.

Food sharing in hunter-gatherer societies is quite important to maintain and develop social relationships among residential group members. They construct social relationships based not on fixed relationships such as kinship, but on daily face-to-face interaction (Ingold, 1988). To whom and what kinds of food the owner gives expresses how the owner makes and keeps social relationships with the receivers or non-receivers in daily life (Kitanishi, 2001; MacDonald, 2000). The decline in food sharing may affect social cohesion in these societies. Although buying and selling with money can realize exchange among a wider range of persons, such transactions little affect social relationships. A meat owner sells meat to anyone who can buy it with the price he wishes. The motivation of a seller is not to build a familiar relationship with the buyer, whereas a meat owner shares meat with others for intimacy for no return.

It is not correct to simply conclude that sharing will decrease in the Baka society. At present, money is not shared directly, but indirectly. When they gain a small amount of money, they immediately purchase local spirits as well as cigarettes and marijuana. These are the things which should be shared most eagerly.

It seems that the nature of food sharing is slightly different from that of local spirits, cigarettes and marijuana. In food sharing, the owners of food are generally able to choose the receivers, but in sharing local spirits, cigarettes and marijuana, there is no room for choice for the owners, who must share them with all of those present,<sup>(11)</sup> and the function of food sharing to make social relationships does not fully work. Other researchers of the Baka indicate the importance of their dance performance to maintain and construct social



relationships (Tsuru, 1998; Bundo, 2001), which may supplement the social role of sharing.

## MONEY AND EQUALITY IN THE BAKA SOCIETY

It is said that one feature of the hunter-gatherer societies is the economic and social equality, and that sharing is one factor supporting it (Ichikawa, 1991b). Does the decline of food sharing affect equality in the Baka society?

Murphy & Steward (1956) wrote that with the introduction of money and commoditization, if each individual or family could independently access resources which produced cash income, they would come to pursue the interest of the individual or family to obtain as many commodities as possible. This situation creates inequality in cash income, depending on the capability of individual or family. But for the Mbuti, who collectively hunt with nets, it is difficult to simply seek the profit of each individual or family, because cooperation is necessary in net hunting (Ichikawa, 1991a).

There is actually a large difference in cash income among the Baka in Ndongo Village at present. The main activities which make cash income are cacao cultivation, wage labor and hunting with trap and shotgun. These activities can be practiced by each individual or family. Cash income from cacao yields and wage labor in Hausas' cacao fields, which are the most important sources of cash income in the village, has great variation. In addition, when a logging company employed the Baka, there was larger difference in cash income between employees and non-employees than that at present.

While in any hunter-gatherer society, there is more or less difference in productivity between individuals or families, this difference does not always result in economic or social inequality. The existence of an economic and/or social system which fixes or increases this difference is needed to establish inequality. To the contrary, it is said that there are economic and social systems which reduce this difference in hunter-gatherer societies (Ichikawa, 1991b). One of the most important systems is sharing.

It is reported that in some hunter-gatherer societies, economic inequality occurred after the penetration of cash and commoditization (Peterson & Matsuyama, 1991). According to Gomes (1991), among the Semai in Malaysia, chiefs of villages collected commission on fruit sales from the villagers. Formerly, the chiefs shared this profit with the villagers through feasts, but recently they accumulate this profit. In this case, the system where the chief collected commission changed into a system which maintained or enhanced economic inequality.

In spite of the difference in cash income, I cannot find extreme inequality in property among Baka individuals or families. The Baka society has economic and social systems which diminish differences in cash income. They seldom accumulate money. With a small amount of money, they soon buy and share local spirits. Payment of bride-wealth is the most important system

in preventing economic inequality. The most crucial point whether economic inequality arises or not lies in the use of bills of high denomination. In the Baka economy, such bills are used as bride-wealth, restricted from circulating in the economy directly. Because the sum of bride-wealth is not determined strictly, and because it is paid whenever they obtain bills of high denomination, nobody can accumulate bills of high denomination. Partial absorption of money into the Baka economy has prevented economic inequality among the Baka. However, the separation of circulation of bills of high denomination from bills of low denomination and coins gradually may become obscure. There is a possibility of future inequality.

An omen of the economic system that supports inequality can be found: the commoditization of Baka labor by the Baka. If Mbombo's attempt shown above becomes routine and the Baka realize the capitalistic use of money, they can exploit other Bakas' labor. When some Baka continuously enlarges the cacao fields with other Bakas' labor and buy up cacao fields of other Baka, real inequality among individuals or families would be established. At present, the possibility of the society proceeding into this direction is not large, because there is a vast primary forest for the Baka to clear for new fields around Ndongo Village. The Baka will not become laborers without means of production. A land tenure system is probably one key factor which may determine the future of the Baka.

Although economic inequality between families is not so large, that within families has gradually increased, especially between men and women. Sources of cash income for women are limited, and women generally earn a smaller amount of money than men. The most important sources of cash income are cacao harvest from the Baka fields and wage from working in the Hausas' cacao fields. Because cacao fields are regarded as men's, the profit from cacao belongs to men. Men earn more for field labor than women; men, 30,000-100,000 CFA francs; women, 15,000-30,000 CFA francs. Outsiders including Japanese researchers, generally employ only men. Circulation of bills of high denomination as bride-wealth is limited only to men. Meat obtained from hunting is the most important source of cash income gotten from wild resources. Sources for a large cash income for women are only the Hausas' cacao field labor (but less than men) and molded cakes of *Irvingia* nuts.

However, I did not feel a large difference in social status in Baka daily life between men and women. More detailed study on the impact of the difference in cash income between men and women on the economic and social relationships in the Baka society is necessary in the future.

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL WORLD

Peterson (1991) indicated that the impact on hunter-gatherer societies and economies varied, due to whether they were coerced into the cash economy by the external societies, or they accepted the cash economy, spontaneously to

some extent. With coercive introduction, they have to work as wage laborers without any choice due to the deprivation of their land and subsistence, earn cash to pay heavy taxes to government, and sometimes receive a large amount of cash for welfare. It is expected that coercive introduction more destructively affects hunter-gatherer societies and economies.

According to Murphy & Steward (1956), when hunter-gatherers are fascinated with products from outside, especially from industrial countries, and their economy becomes commoditized, they often have to take a subordinate position to traders, because they fall in debt to the traders. Peterson (1991) wrote that this does not always occur. For instance, although the Mbuti hunters were sometimes in debt to meat traders, they kept their autonomy in their hunting and transaction (Ichikawa, 1991a). But the Agta in the Philippines took a subordinate position to neighboring farmers who sell commodities to them, due to a large amount of debt. Because the neighboring farmers prevented the Agta from adopting cultivation, accompanied with ill treatment from the local police and authority, the Agta were forced to depend on grains sold by neighboring farmers to maintain their daily life (Griffin, 1991).

At present, the Baka, although they occasionally owe the Bakwele and Hausa merchants money, do not take an economically subordinate position. Their autonomy is in tact because they can acquire the majority of food for themselves through cultivating their own fields and hunting-gathering in the forest, and because Baka labor is indispensable for cacao cultivation for the neighboring farmers and the Hausa (Kitanishi, 2003). The Baka accepted the cash economy spontaneously, compared to other hunter-gatherers, although the impact from external societies such as the colonial government policy of sedentarization and adoption of cultivation existed. At least, the Baka have never been deprived of their land and seldom paid tax.

The dominance of neighboring farmers over the Aka Pygmies in northeastern Congo seems to be quite strong. When I researched the Aka in the beginning of the 1990s, the Aka seldom used money, the neighboring farmers controlled the circulation of industrial products, and the Aka partially depended on the agricultural food harvested in farmers' fields because they did not have their own. The neighboring farmers thought that the Aka were in debt to them for all the industrial goods, steel products and agricultural food they gave them. They firmly regarded the Aka as socially and economically inferior.

Althabe (1965) reported that the dominance of the farmers over the Baka grew in the 1950s, and that the farmers regarded the Baka partner as "property." He described this relationship similar to "slavery." As the farmers considered the Baka assistance of agricultural work in their fields obligatory, they came to think it unnecessary to give agricultural food to the Baka in return. Consequently, the Baka could no longer obtain enough food from farmers.

Although Althabe (1965) did not describe the reason why the dominance of the farmers over the Baka grew, I think that the control of farmers over the circulation of money and European goods was one factor in this dominance.<sup>(12)</sup> The neighboring farmers, especially a specific partner, has generally been the

intermediary of the Pygmies for goods from external societies (Bahuchet, 1985; Kitanishi, 1994; Terashima, 1986). Because the Baka were deeply fascinated with industrial goods from Europe and because farmers prevented the Baka from directly acquiring them, the Baka probably owed a large amount of debt to the farmers. Althabe (1965) indicated that farmers lent money to some Baka to pay bride-wealth, which was also one cause of debt. Because of a large debt, farmers did not pay any return for the Baka assistance in the fields, and the dominance was established.

Under these circumstances, the Baka adopted cultivation of their own fields to obtain food for themselves (Kitanishi, 2003). The case of the Baka is different from that of the Agta in the adoption of cultivation. Neighboring farmers of the Baka did not prevent the Baka from possessing their own fields. The Baka consequently succeeded in cultivating their own fields. In addition, the increasing importance of cacao and coffee field labor and the advance of logging companies weakened farmer control of the circulation of industrial goods and money in the Baka economy. These factors diminished Baka's debt to farmers and merchants, and realized their partial economic autonomy from farmers and merchants.

The prediction of Murphy & Steward (1956) cannot simply apply to the case of the Baka. There were many factors affecting the relationship with external societies. We must also consider the historical process, which is complex. In the 1950s, when adoption of money and commoditization began, the prediction of Murphy & Steward (1956) was probably valid. But the adaptability of the Baka and the external economic circumstances have contributed to the recovery of their autonomy.

However, the Baka are actually at a disadvantage in the economic transaction because they are peripheral in the market economy and nation state. The fact that their daily wage is generally a half of that of farmers shows the partial economic dominance of the farmers over the Baka. In addition to farmers, merchants and logging companies, new factors such as the associations for conservation might affect the Baka economy and society in future. I must not forget that researchers also have an impact on them.

## MONEY AND THE BAKA AS HUNTER-GATHERERS

About fifty years have passed since the Baka began to use money. The economy of the Baka has not simply been absorbed by the money economy, as their use of money as bride-wealth shows. The systems for sharing, and immediate and direct production-consumption have been maintained, although affected by various factors (Kitanishi, 2000; Kitanishi, 2003). However, their economy is not independent of money. Social and economic change will continue in the future, affected by external world.

In spite of a large difference in cash income and decreased food sharing, it seems that there is not a large social disparity among the Baka. Their social

equality endured the impact of a large amount of cash flow from logging companies. On this point, they have maintained the characteristics of hunter-gatherers.

The economic activities of the Baka do not seem to solely pursue maximum cash income. If they wanted to maximize cash income, they should concentrate on cacao cultivation or wage labor in Hausas' cacao fields. But they do not completely abandon the life in the forest. Although the activities in the forest partly pursue cash income, they more frequently shared food there than in the sedentary settlement, which seemed to create more intimate relationships among the Baka. When I stayed in the settlement to research their cultivation in 2000, the wife of my assistant asked him to move to the forest camp where their relatives lived and collected *Irvingia* nuts. She considered that the life in the forest with her relatives was more important than the wage of her husband. Although Baka life must have been changed, they still seek to be hunter-gatherers.

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## NOTES

- (1) This dichotomy is probably too simple. The actual situation would exist between these two poles or as a compromise between two.
- (2) Although other researchers denote this people as "Bakwele," I denoted this people as "Bakpele" in my previous paper (Kitanishi, 2003). The consonants of "kp" sound very close to "kw," and the pronunciation of the name of this people varies with villages or persons. Although I regard consonants of "kp" as closer to the pronunciation by the people in Ndongo Village than "kw," I use "kw" in this paper to avoid confusion.
- (3) CFA franc is the currency used in francophone central Africa. Before 1994, 50 CFA francs were equal to 1 French franc. In January 1994, because of redenomination, 100 CFA francs became equal 1 French franc. At present, 655.957 CFA francs are equal to 1 Euro. In 2000, coins of 10, 25, 50, 100 and 500 CFA francs, and bills of 500, 1000, 5000 and 10,000 CFA francs circulated. I also interviewed the Baka in Beson Village, 150 km north of Ndongo. In that village, a logging company operated until 1997. Many

- Baka were employed, guarding bulldozers, cutting trees with chainsaws and assisting drivers. Their wage was 66,000 CFA francs a month.
- (4) For shifting cultivation in this area, see Kitanishi (2003).
  - (5) Actually, I observed meat sharing more frequently in the forest camp than in the settlement. This reason should be considered in future.
  - (6) All names of the Baka are assumed names.
  - (7) I saw the list of bride-wealth of a deceased Baka man. The sum was 219,600 CFA francs, converting into money several goods he had given to his wife's father. However, a man quite rarely records and calculates the sum of bride-wealth.
  - (8) Although the Aka man also gives to his wife's father pots, plates and clothes, they are not formally recognized as bride-wealth.
  - (9) According to Bundo (per. com.), an old Baka man made some Baka youth work at his field in exchange for marijuana. He explained to Bundo that he did not have enough physical power to do the work, and Bundo supposed that there was no intent to acquire more for the money he invested in the marijuana from the youth.
  - (10) The return on labor is not always immediate even in hunting and gathering. For example, making a hunting-tool does not produce immediate return. But the Baka do not make tools with large and accumulated labor input. The major parts of their productive activities are oriented toward a direct and immediate return.
  - (11) In food sharing, the owner's discretion of receivers is respected by others. When food is shared, persons being shared food generally avoid approaching the owner, because the behavior expresses the demand for sharing. In sharing local spirits, cigarettes and marijuana, however, others do not hesitate to approach the owner for their shares. The reason in the difference may be that the strong attractiveness of these goods exceeds their repression of desire.
  - (12) Although more social factors should be considered in analyzing the dominance of farmers over the Baka, it is not possible to cover them within the scope of this paper.

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